The Seed Sower.

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CONTENTS.

		PAGE.
1.	Pray, and be Calm. Poem. F. Langbridge	113
2.	Taking the Name of God in Vain. Sermon. Rev. L. P. Jacks, M.A.	113
3.	A Plea for the Book of Common Prayer. II. Rev. Edgar I. Fripp, B.A. ...	116
4.	Parables of the Alps. Rev. Joseph Wood	118
5.	The Acorn. Poem. Maud L. Cotton ...	120
6.	What is it to be a Liberal? Charles W. Wendte	121
7.	Another Reading of "Helbeck of Bannisdale." J. Warschauer	123
8.	Anniversary Hymn. F. L. Hosmer ...	125
9.	In the Garden of England	126
10.	Ideal Womanhood	127
11.	The Children's Page...	128

Pray, and be Calm.

If some old doctrine of thy youth
Thou mayst no more repeat,
Gaze not as though God's very truth
Lay shattered at thy feet.

What though the broken moonbeam spill
Its silver o'er the tide,
See through the clouds how sure and still
The fair, round moon doth ride!

Art in the dark? Still, God is there;
Nor needst thou light to pray:
Good angels find the poor, blind prayer,
And lead a nearer way.

Pray, and be calm: why shouldst thou doubt,
Though night be on thine eyes?
When God doth put His street-lamps out,
The sun is nigh to rise.—*F. Langbridge.*

Be like the sun, that pours its ray
To glad and glorify the day.

Be like the moon, that sheds its light
To bless and beautify the night.

Be like the stars, that sparkle on,
Although the sun and moon be gone.

Be like the skies, that steadfast are,
Though absent sun and moon and star.

It is not the many things we know, but the one thing we believe, that ennobles.

Taking the Name of God in Vain.

A SERMON BY THE

REV. L. P. JACKS, M.A.

"*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*"—Exodus xx. 7.

This commandment assumes that God is jealous, and to that extent it contains an element of superstition. The thought of God's determination to maintain his own honour plays an important part in the theology of the Old Testament: It belongs to that early tendency of mind which ascribed to the Deity the instincts and sometimes the passions of an Oriental monarch. But a strain of a sincere piety mingles with the superstition. As one would hardly think of addressing a king or a great nobleman by his proper name, so, but with tenfold reasons, the name Deity must not be carelessly used. Even the faintest beginnings of the God consciousness will make a man reluctant to use the sacred name except with a serious meaning and when the occasion calls for its employment. It is with God that we have chiefly to do in life; and no one who believes this will commit the irreverence of tampering even with the word.

This would hold good in any case, whether our conception of God be based on the Old Testament or the New, on Jewish prophecy or on Christian speculation. But the more we depart from material views of the Deity, the more we cease to think of him as a "magnified and non-natural man," the more deeply we enter into the definition of God as a Spirit, and of his worship as offered in spirit and truth, so much the more shall we feel the force of that commandment which forbids the taking of God's name in vain. The rule might even be extended to those who do not believe in God at all, or who think they do not believe in him,—for that is the truer description of them. For those persons as well as the rest have something in life to which they confess allegiance, some highest object of thought and aspiration the name of which they may not take in vain. The scientific man who honours only the abstract truth, the artist who owns no God but Beauty, the Positivist whose highest duties are paid to his fellowman, in the lives of all these there is that which may not be spoken lightly of without incurring guilt. I speak of course of serious men, who cultivate self-respect, not of triflers, nor of sensualists. Indeed it may be set down as a true mark of degradation when in the whole circle of man's interests, pursuits and relationships there is nothing of which it is an admitted guilt to speak lightly.

Most persons recognize the presence in their lives of some sort of power which calls them to higher things. How that power should be named is a question we may leave aside. Whether it consist of mere social influences, or of hereditary tendencies within ourselves, or whether it be the direct result of education, there is always a certain dissatisfaction with our personal selves and a certain desire for fuller life, for higher pleasures, for a more perfect mastery of the art of happiness and the art of work. If we are specialists of any sort in the professions or in the practice of a particular art, then that desire for fuller attainment will take a correspondingly distinct form. If, on the other hand, we belong to the undistinguishable throng of ordinary folk, it is still hardly possible for us to live without being aware of forces urging us to greater things, though perhaps we cannot say whether those forces are an earthy pressure acting from within, or a heavenly attraction drawing us from above. If a man is somewhat of a poet, he is very apt to think that one day he will be able to write better than Shakespeare; if an orator, he may still out-do Demosthenes and Cicero; if a painter, it is only the accident of fortune that he has not yet out-shone the glory of Raphael. Our actual world—by which I mean our present pursuits and interests, the present range of our capacities and our happiness—this actual world seems to be enfolded within a larger world, like a globe enclosed by one of higher dimensions, and it is as though some force inside the lesser world were perpetually urging it to expand to the dimensions of the greater. Our personal life is always waiting to open out into larger life; and around all that which constitutes my present self there is a greater self, which is doing its very best to become *me*. No man can ever say exactly who and what he is; because at every moment of his life he may be passing into another man who shall belong to a higher order of being than his predecessor. Thus a distinction comes to be established which, if we rightly understood it, we should find to be the most important and significant thing in this universe; the distinction between the world that exists and the world that may exist, between the life that we live and the larger life into which we are growing up, between the man as he now is and the higher man he is tending to become. Here in the midst lies a little island which consists of life as it is and of things as they are, and all round this rolls the infinite ocean of life as it might be and of things as they ought to become; and as in the case of many a literal island where subterranean agencies are at work, the shores slowly extend themselves outward and the waters make a gradual retreat until what was at first a solitary rock in the sea has grown to the size of a continent,—so does life enlarge its boundaries, until the spaces which a little time before were occupied by hopes, dreams, ideals, aspirations, and such-like airy nothings, are now converted into the solid land of experience and possession. That is the history of all souls which fulfil their destiny; it is also the history of the human race from age to age. In the midst the actual world such as we know it, and the life which we now live: all around a better world not yet actual but wanting to become so, and a larger

life not yet lived but seeking to take us up into itself. If technical language be permitted, I suppose we should have to call the first world the real and the other the ideal; and have to say that the growth of human spirits and the march of history simply consist of the ideal turning into the real, so that things which to-day exist only in thought, in hope, in desire, and in aspiration, by to-morrow have solidified into fact.

This state of things is what a thoughtful man has in mind to-day when he utters the name of God. Comparing his thoughts with those of the Hebrew sage, who speaks in my text, we perceive a remarkable difference and also a remarkable likeness. The ancient thinker had in mind a certain picture of the physical framework of the universe—and a very simple picture it was. To him the earth and the heavens constituted a vast and splendid tent: the earth its floor, the heaven its covering, the sun, moon, and stars its appointed lamps for day and night. Looking up to the sky he saw a material firmament, and when he lowered his eyes to the horizon he saw the points where the heavens rested firmly but lightly on the four corners of the earth. What lay beyond it, on the other side of that blue and splendid curtain, of this his science knew nothing; but his faith told him that *there*, in that mysterious beyond, was the dwelling-place of God. This view of how the world is made has long vanished from the stage of physical science; this idea of the dwelling-place of God has been long discarded by serious theology; but though dead in the physical sphere it still survives in the moral, and though children are the only people who can entertain it as a picture of things material, sages have still no other way of representing the things that are spiritual. For around this little platform of the good that is they see the illimitable ocean of the good that may be, and beyond this circle of the life that is real, they see the vaster circle of the life that is ideal. And *there* surely is the dwelling-place of God; *there* in that highest heaven to which our moral aspirations are for ever turning; *there* in the region of the good we believe in, hope for, and strive after; *there* in the vaster circle of that life towards which our own is ever seeking to expand; *there* in the midst of that beauty which our noblest art essays to copy, that joy with which the heart of man hungers to be filled, that justice, towards which humanity slowly fights its way—*there*, I say, in that vast surrounding circle of ideal good, in that deep beyond of things that are not but must be, of life that is not but ought to be—lives the Being to whom in deepest reverence we give the name of God. And surely if we have not yet discovered the existence of such an ideal world it must be said that we have lived in vain; and if we have not recognised how it dominates the real world, and controls the course of history, we are but poor observers of what goes on under the sun. Should anyone say "It is a dream and has no power," I would answer that it has more power than all other forces combined, for it draws the entire history of man in its train. It is the dominant attraction into which all the movements of human life are ultimately drawn. It is the underlying power of this world's affairs. It persists unchanged while all else changes. Through all conflicts and storms, through the ups and downs of history, through lapses of faith, through the possible extremes of man's disloyalty and sin, through the seeming chaos and hurly-burly of Time, there goes on the unceasing transformation of the actual good into the ideal better. No power? Our very notion of power is founded on the proceedings of this Almighty force. We call it God, thereby personifying it; not because we know all its qualities, but because a Power whose sole operation is to lift, to enlarge, to better, and to bless cannot be less than a Person. And when we consider the kind of result at which that Power aims, and the unfaltering steadiness and pertinacity with which it pursues its work of blessing, we shall probably admit that the best definition of the Divine Nature ever given is that of St. John—"God is Love."

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Otherwise expressed this commandment forbids us to play with the ideal—to deal lightly, profanely, flippantly, or faithlessly with the ideal side of our life. Against play in general there is no Divine prohibition, but it is severely forbidden to play with this particular thing. An enormously wide margin is conceded to men for their lighter moods and for their less serious

occupations, but in regard to one matter at least every created soul is required to be in earnest. That one thing is the Divine purpose to lift him beyond himself. To that purpose we must respond, or perish. We have seen there is a Power above the world which seeks to lift the world; a Life beyond life which seeks to raise life: that Power and Life we encounter in every human pursuit and interest; in Science, Art, Politics and Religion; and wherever we meet them the mood of play must cease, the mood of consecration must begin, the loins must be girded up, the lamp lit, the shoes taken off the feet, for the spot whereon we stand is holy ground. As to the many forms in which men presume to play with the ideal, much might be said,—collectively in their churches, singly in their thoughts, publicly in literature, privately in conversation, gracefully in Art, coarsely in their pleasure. For the present I name only some of its effects, which are shallows and misery in the personal life, the disappearance of political virtue in the nation, loss of evangelical power in the pulpit, decay in the Fine Arts, disease in Literature, death to the imagination, to poetry, and to faith. These are some of the signs that the Lord holds neither the man nor the nation guiltless that taketh his Name in vain.

A Plea for the Book of Common Prayer.

By the Rev. Edgar I. Fripp, B.A.

II.

In my first article I spoke of the introductory portion of the service, compiled by the Protestant Reformers, and added to the Prayer Book in 1552.

Now I come to the more ancient part, taken almost entirely from the Catholic Breviary, beginning with the Lord's Prayer, and concluding with the Collect for Grace.

The old Catholic worship began with the *Paternoster* repeated by the priest inaudibly (privatim) lest the sacred words should become known to the unbaptised. The Reformers at once (1549) turned the prayer into English, and enjoined that it should be spoken "with a loude voyce." This again illustrates the principle of the Reformation, which cannot be sufficiently emphasised, that public worship should be equally for *all*, and "understanded" by *all*.

Omitting the *Ave Maria*, which was offered by the priest, also in secret, after the *Paternoster*, the revisers took up the opening *Versicles*, and gave them too in English.

Priest: O Lord, open thou my lips.

Answer: And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

Priest: O God, make speed to save me.

Answer: O Lord, make haste to help me.

The two first are from Psalm li. 15; the last two are from Psalm lxx. 1. Observe in passing the alliteration in "speed" and "save," "haste" and "help." In 1552 "my" and "me" were changed to "our" and "us," as more appropriate for public worship.

Then comes the *Gloria*: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." After this are more *Versicles*, the second of which was added in 1637:—

Priest: Praise ye the Lord.

Answer: The Lord's name be praised.

The *Venite* follows (so called from its beginning in the Latin), the 95th Psalm, a joyous summons to worship in the Temple.

Already so many questions arise out of this portion of the service that before I go further I will consider how far it is suitable for modern usage.

Firstly, the Lord's Prayer. Even this has its critics. Some object to the material petition, "Give us this day our daily bread;" others do not like the words "Lead us not into temptation." Personally, I do not think it is wrong to ask for anything we honestly want, material or spiritual. The most that can be said against a material request is that it may be unwise. Is it, then, unwise to ask for daily bread? In asking it we express our dependence upon the Divine Giver, and seek the courage and strength needed for an honest livelihood. And I do not believe that anyone can fervently say for himself and family, "Give us this day our daily bread," without feeling braced up for his day's duties. This is the only material request in the prayer. All the others are spiritual, including the petition

which assumes that God tempts us. Some would substitute for it the words, "Leave us not in temptation." The change, in my opinion, is unnecessary, and not an improvement. In a very real sense God *does* lead us into temptation, and, at the same time, it is natural and right that we should dread and avoid it. By bringing us into being at all, in a world full of temptations, and giving us free-will, and calling us to a life which is only to be achieved with great difficulty, God submits us to dangerous tests. No doubt it is for our good, but that is from His point of view. From our side temptation is and can only be hateful and terrible. It would be not temptation if it were not so—if it were not something to greatly fear and escape at all costs.

I would keep every word of the dear old prayer. No worship for me would be complete without it. Apart from its sacred origin, for more than eighteen hundred years it has uttered the needs of Christendom. It has been lisped by children, sung to music in splendid cathedrals, spoken by rough voices in village meetings, wrung from the lips of repentant sinners, and murmured by the sick and the dying. All the deepest philosophy of the human mind is summed up in the two words, "Our Father." The universe is not its own, and man is not his own. Invisible Spirit fills creation, and has *kinship* with us. God has put *Himself* into every living soul, and every man, by this mysterious parentage, is brother to every other man. And the moment we feel this we want the *Kingdom of God.* We are stung by the cruel injustice and selfishness of the world, and begin to work for the kingship, not of blood and money and gunpowder, but of righteousness and truth and love. Therefore we want *bread*, not riches, not the means of show and boastfulness, but enough for plain living and high thinking; and more than bread, we want *forgiveness*, and *fear* of sin, and *deliverance* from weakness, and a sense of God's *rule* and *power* and *glory* in this world and the next *for ever and ever.*

The *Gloria*, however, raises real difficulties. Can we sincerely say "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost?" Does it mean anything to us? Does it express our feeling towards the Godhead? Can we say it enthusiastically?

People will answer these questions variously. I can only speak for myself; and I do not hesitate to say that I want at least another form of expression.

This famous old *Gloria* does not help my devotion. It brings up immediately a host of theological and historical associations, of immense intellectual interest, but not religious. We do not want argument and criticism in our prayers and hymns. A Unitarian doxology, as "Glory be to the Father, the One and Single Deity," would be still more objectionable. Instead of helping us to a holy, forgiving frame of mind it would awaken the spirit of contention and self-satisfaction.

As for the *Trinity* itself, I think it is one of the most profound and suggestive doctrines ever held by man; and to denounce it, as some Unitarians do, seems to me simple Philistinism.

The authoritative, domineering form in which the doctrine is presented in the Athanasian creed is certainly offensive. Even the Beatitudes, if introduced in this way, would excite hostility. The noblest truth must suffer from such intolerance. And then, the numerical absurdities of the Athanasian statement tempt one to dismiss the whole thing as a superstition.

But the doctrine cannot be so dismissed. It is too venerable, and has taken too deep a hold on Christendom, to be thus set aside. It is much older than Athanasius. Its roots are to be found in the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles of St. Paul, which are among the most glorious of religious writings. To treat it as the invention of priests is ridiculous. It has grown up among intensely earnest men, and has satisfied the wants of the deepening Christian consciousness. It sprang out of the sense of the corruption of the Roman world. At first the Christians regarded the world as too evil to last; then, as too vile to be the work of God. The Infinite Perfection could not, they thought, have had a hand in it. Hence they attributed creation to some lesser delegated God, the "Logos" or "Word" of Alexandrian philosophy, who was the medium and agency of the Highest, and not too good to move in and out among men, and whom they identified with Christ. Justice and pity were thus reconciled. The Father was too holy to concern Himself with or to forgive such a worthless world; and *the Son* was needed to have to do with it, and redeem it.

A further development followed. When the Son had done His work of redemption, and had returned to Heaven, His absence was sorely felt on earth. It was not enough that the moral law was once more manifest and within reach by a great example and sacrifice. Men required an ever-present Helper, a constant personal Inspiration. They were not satisfied with a redemption which was past, nor with unvarying, unalterable moral law; they wanted a loving, redeeming Power which would be always with them and would act directly, without law, upon their hearts and change them. Thus a third God, or a third personality of the Godhead was conceived, *the Holy Ghost.*

Fabulous then as the form of the doctrine may appear in the light of modern criticism of Scripture and Ecclesiastical History, the religious essence of it is imperishable. Unitarianism touches only the form. It does not reach the essence. Like Jewish Monotheism, or Stoicism, it leaves the great problems of sin and atonement and divine sacrifice unexplained, and equally fails to stir the heroic in man's heart.

Now, no Deity can be too pure to care for the world and sinful man. Such "purity" is not divine but aristocratic, selfish and pharisaical. God-like goodness does not stand apart in horror and disgust, but stoops to pity and bless—nay, not *stoops*, but *rises* to pity and bless. There is no such Being as the solitary isolated "perfect" first person of the Trinity. That is a fiction born of heathen exclusiveness and caste. God has indeed laid down the law of righteousness, but in so far as it is for our good, He is never estranged by our disobedience, and is never remote. He does not let the world spin on and work itself out, and man go his own way to happiness or misery. He does not love us if we love Him and hate us if we hate Him. His love is without condition, and full of urgency. His love needs us, calls to us, draws us, appeals to us to share in the divine life and suffering and triumph. God only lives to make alive. He is only rich to make rich. Every day His whole being goes forth into creation. Every hour He empties his vast treasury at our feet. He takes upon Himself every minute all the unspeakable burden of human pain and sin, and bears it to conquer it and turn it into blessedness. There is no love, no sacrifice, no suffering, no triumph, no joy like His.

The second person of the Trinity, therefore, instead of being the lesser, is the greater God, the real God; and instead of the Father giving His beloved Son for the world's redemption, *He gives Himself.* Yes, He gives Himself! Here is the vast truth, the tremendous mystery to which the doctrine of the Trinity should lead us, and which is absolutely foreign to Unitarianism. The crucifixion and the redemption are not mere far-away events of history but present, every day realities. The divine Self-Sacrifice is here and now, and the universe is full of it. It is never over and done with. God dies every day to redeem, and every day He rises again in glorious resurrection, and passes with infinite triumph from life to life.

Parables of the Alps.

I.

A few Sundays ago I sat in a little room more than 7000 feet above the sea level, a room which overlooked the whole length of a great Alpine valley, backed up 40 miles away by the dazzling snows of the Bernese Oberland. Almost within a stone's throw, as it seemed, of where I sat arose the giant Matterhorn on his solitary throne, while right and left a crowd of peaks, silent, majestic, kept a more than regal court. Down below in the valley I could see, like a dark thread on a patch of vivid green, the track of the mountain railroad that brought, day by day, a multitude of sightseers into this heart of the Alps. From a little church, built for English visitors, came floating, and mellowed by the distance, the music of our own favourite psalms and hymns. It was a divine moment. The scene, bathed in sunshine, touched the heart with a sense both of power and of peace.

Not more than fifty years ago this glorious scene was almost unknown; this beautiful valley, bounded north and south, east and west, by the most magnificent peaks, was almost inaccessible. A footpath led the woodman or the goatherd from hamlet to hamlet, from one rude collection of châlets to another, and only an adventurous spirit once in a year or

so from the outside found his way into this inner shrine of Nature's grandeur. And even he made no attempt, or attempting failed, to scale these majestic peaks. But the growing spirit of delight in Nature's beauty, which belongs to our century, and which, like a new sense, has so wonderfully enlarged its life, sent an increasing number of worshippers into the Zermatt Valley, in spite of its rude accommodation, scanty fare, and ill-kept path. Presently a mule track succeeded to the footpath, and, as the travellers multiplied, a carriage road followed the mule track; while, finally, a mountain railroad—a wonderful triumph of engineering skill—opened the district to thousands of limited means and leisure, making its loveliness, wonder, and delight possessions for the many, a treasure-house with open doors for all who choose to enter.

It was with no small difficulty that the railroad was brought along the narrow rocky valley, ascending, as it does in its course, 3000 feet. The mountain sides were ploughed and scarred, and for a while made hideous by the slowly-creeping line. Rocks were blasted, and heaps of debris took the place of sweet Alpine pastures. But the line was no sooner finished than Nature began her work of healing, repairing, and beautifying. Presently grass and flowers, ferns and mosses, covered the scars and wounds and debris, and nothing now is left of the rough treatment but the line itself, carrying in the summer season its daily burden of holiday folk.

Which things are a parable. For the great universal truths of Art, Science, Freedom, Ethics, and Religion, truths which tower aloft like Alpine peaks, the truths of one only God, of the Unity of God and Man, of the Spirituality of Worship, of the Supremacy of Conscience, and many another, were first of all to men, like these unknown, inaccessible mountains and mountain valleys. None breathed their diviner air, none dreamed of their beauty. But an adventurous spirit here and there, some bold enquirer, some explorer, some humble Columbus, or Nansen, or Whymper, some soul seeking better things pushed his way a little up the valley, and then another took up the journey and made a further advance, until at last one more daring and more fortunate than the rest reached the untrodden height, where a wide and wondrous prospect of truth opened itself to view. Yet it was long before the journey thus taken by a few became possible for the many. There was no safe track, and some were too timid, and some too conservative in habit, and some mocked at the idea of there being anything finer or grander than their own limited view in the thronged and dusty plain. And when the travellers came back and wished to lead the multitude to those lonely peaks, some were imprisoned, and some were stoned, and some were crucified. Yet the journey having once been made its attraction for the human spirit became irresistible. Others followed; the solitary footpath became a well-worn track, and the track a high road, and now whole nations breathe the air of those lofty, invigorating truths which once were known only to a few. In the process of making them accessible what scars and wounds humanity has received; what disasters, what blasting away of rocks of prejudice, what uprootings of ignorance and superstition. But at last, at last, the deed has been accomplished, the way opened, the path made easy, and all the world rejoices in the far-reaching landscape.

But nothing is so tiresome as an illustration ridden to death. No parable must be pushed to exactitude; it is a sugggestion only, a hint, a flash of light upon the darkness. Not to all its lengths would I push this parable of the Alps; nor must I be supposed to approve of every project for carrying railways up mountians, invading the solitudes and sanctities of Nature with the screaming whistle and sulphurous breath of the steam engine. My parable suggests one idea,—that the great, simple, majestic, universal ideas of religion are come at after much waiting, much toil, much danger, many wounds and sacrifices,—that the most beautiful things of religion were not given to the world at first, but have been arrived at after toilsome and perilous journeys, that they have been discovered by or revealed to (it is the same thing) first of all some adventurous prophet-soul, whose word was not believed, and who suffered the penalty of all pioneers; but that gradually these great and world-wide truths have by labours and sorrows

innumerable come to be the common possession of mankind.

II.

Amid all the grandeurs of the Alps, few things have such a charm for me as the flowers growing under the very edge and lip of the glaciers, lifting themselves up in beauty where for three-fourths of the year storm and frost, thunder-blast and icy airs reign supreme. Small and delicate, yet multitudinous as the sands of the shore, they have a beauty which touches the heart more than the richest blooms of garden or conservatory. They are everywhere, continuous as the stars that shine and twinkle on the Milky Way, a host of all shades of colour, flashing like jewels over green pastures, and brown dusty rocks and patches where an hour ago lay the snow. And the marvel is how they grow there in such perfection of colouring with so little to sustain them. They seem to live on air and sunshine. In the crack of a rock where half-a-dozen grains of sand have lodged themselves, under the shadow of the ice where a thimbleful of soil has been hidden by the snow, on the barren hill sides, where nothing else will grow, nor corn, nor fruit, nor healing herb, there the flowers flourish.

It is a parable of how human life may be beautiful under the severest and hardest outward conditions. As the Alpine flowers, so tender and exquisite in form, so soft and yet so brilliant in colour, need not a heap of rich earth into which to plunge their roots, nor ask to be fed with fat manure, but flourish where Nature is at her sternest and barest, and gather sustenance from the air of heaven only, so it is borne in upon me that the most beautiful lives may be lived with very little of this world's wealth or comfort in which to root themselves. Providence may have denied you many of the so-called "good things" which others possess; your lot may be hard; you may have wintry storms to contend with; not for you the rich loamy earth with its abundant harvest, but only the rocky soil, with here and there a patch of verdure, and yet your life may have in it the fair blossoms of love, patience, kindness, truth, gentleness, charity, mercy, and meekness, and great beauty may be yours. These flowers of the spiritual life can do with very little earthly soil; they breathe and live on heavenly air; they draw their sustenance from the skies.

JOSEPH WOOD.

The Acorn.

Once from off a bent twig shaken
By the west wind fiercely blowing,
On to ground all rough and barren
Fell a brown and shining acorn.
In its shell the small nut rested,
Half way down the sloping hillside;
Pale, tall grasses whispered to it,
Daisy heads bowed low before it,
Daisy faces, gray and withered,
Wrinkled with the age of summer,
Looked upon the slight intruder,
Gazed upon the small new comer.

When the sunny light of morning
On the sloping hillside rested,
Brightening the bending grasses,
By its warmth the dark earth cheering,
Waked the acorn from its slumber,
Roused into a life of newness,
Raised to live a life of beauty
In the world so rich and lovely.

Bent and beaten by the north wind,
Blowing from the land of snowflakes,
Scorched and shrivelled by the south wind,
Blowing from the land of sunshine,
Still the small stem struggled upward,
In the daylight struggled upward.
Buds to green leaves grew and faded,
Twigs to branches grew and lengthened,
In the days so swiftly passing,
In the years by us forgotten.

Now an oak tree, tough and sturdy,
Still it stands upon the hillside;
In its branches, in the spring time,
Nests by summer birds are builded.
On the ground, when acorns ripen,
Children play beneath its branches,
Gathering acorn "cups and saucers."
So from seeds, small and well ripened,
Trees of beauty grow and strengthen;
Brightening the earth about them
With their wealth of fruit and blossom,
And from out of their spreading branches
Sweet bird songs ascend to heaven.

MAUD L. COTTON.

The country is lyric, the town dramatic. When mingled, they make the most perfect musical drama.

What is it to be a Liberal?

By CHARLES W. WENDTE.

Matthew Arnold somewhere suggests that in the interests of clear and honest thinking we cease to employ all words which have been spoiled by long-continued, theological misconception and misuse. Among these "spoiled" words, to many of us, is the term "liberal." The prevailing idea of what it stands for is so sadly confused and misleading that at times one is tempted to abandon it altogether, and, in characterising the new progressive movement in religion, to employ some other term free from the intellectual bewilderment and abuses of the past, and less likely to be misunderstood by the present generation; and yet the word itself is such a noble one, and so closely interwoven with modern thought and usage, that it seems worth while to redeem it and restore it again to its rightful office—to designate that prevailing element in the religious life of our day which distinguishes it from the rigid, unprogressive, and traditional systems of the past. Let us see if we cannot come to this right understanding of it, and vindicate its continual employment in the service of a rational and spiritual Christianity.

I. Certainly, a man is not liberal simply because he holds advanced or radical opinions. Whether he is liberal or not will depend upon the spirit in which he holds them. If that spirit is narrow, unsympathetic with others' thought, scornful, intolerant, and irreverent—such a man is not a liberal. He is a bigot, no matter how freely he has discarded the traditional creeds or how vehemently he denounces the authority of the Pope, Council, Church, or Priesthood. On the other hand, a man who still clings to these, who accepts the old dogmas, and cherishes the traditional forms of piety, if he displays a broad and kindly temper towards those who differ from him in opinion, if he is ready to believe in others' sincerity, and is charitable toward their views, if in a word, he is "reverent toward others' reverence," that man is a liberal, no matter how orthodox his creed may be.

Herein lies the justification of the current term—"liberal orthodox." Strictly speaking, according to the correct use of language, to call a person liberal orthodox is as irrational as it would be to speak of him as free bound or rightly wrong. For orthodox implies a correct belief; it stands for infallible authority in matters of faith—the authority of Church, Creed, or Scripture. It gives no countenance to any laxity of views, any individual independence of judgment. It permits no tolerance to dissent, no liberality toward heretics. But men's hearts are usually larger than their minds. They are not always logical in their conduct, whatever they may be in their theological opinion. Happily for themselves and the race, many who claim to be orthodox in their theology are truly, however inconsistently, liberal in their sympathies. Phillips Brooks, Heber Newton, and Lyman Abbott may occupy orthodox pulpits, but they are more truly to be reckoned broad-minded and liberal men than are many of our so-called free-thinkers. For it is not the holding of this or that set of opinions, however advanced, but the spirit in which they are held, which marks the true liberal.

It is a great misfortune for the cause of free thought in religion that this is not more generally recognised by the advocates of a rational faith. The mistaken notion widely prevails among them that a man is liberal simply because he is opposed to orthodox forms of belief. The man who vehemently denounces the inherited traditional creeds and institution of Christendom, and ridicules and heaps scorn upon those that uphold them, usually justifies his course on the ground that he is a liberal. And yet, if my contention be true, he is simply a narrow, prejudiced, intolerant fanatic only—a fanatic for free instead of conventional religion. Both types are equally unlovely and harmful to the cause of true religion. For my part, I think the Radical bigot is more hateful than the orthodox, because the logic of his principles ought to teach him to the contrary, and lead him to employ more sympathetic and gentle methods in religion. Orthodoxy, if consistently carried out, naturally leads to intolerance and persecution. But heterodoxy should prompt to the largest forbearance, charity, and kindliness. The worst displays of illiberality to-day are to be found in the free thinkers' conventions and the columns of

certain of their newspapers, while the **Christian Union*, or *Outlook* as it is now called, is a weekly illustration that men may profess orthodox views, and yet display the most broad and reconciling temper.

II. But now it should be added that, if zeal for advanced views in religion doesn't necessarily constitute a liberal, neither does indifference to all religious views. Here we touch upon another mistaken notion current among free thinking people. Such will often tell you that a man's creed is of no importance. It is his conduct by which he must be judged. Indeed, it is almost a cant form of speech among Unitarians to say. "It doesn't matter what a man believes so that his life is right." But this is a mere sophism by which we deceive ourselves. It will not do thus to underrate the importance of intellectual opinions in religion. What a man believes really has a great influence on his character and conduct.

If you were about to employ a physician you would not say that it didn't matter what school of medicine he belonged to, what theories of disease he held, or what he believed the therapeutic effect of his remedies to be. If you were seeking a farmer to take charge of your ranch or orchard, you would not think that his opinions about soils and crops and methods of cultivation would make no difference in his conduct of your affairs. Why, then, should you suppose that a man's religious opinions will have no influence on his moral life? I grant that it may not always be easy to trace this influence in the case of individuals. For, as I have already said, individual believers may hold their opinions very loosely, and be a great deal broader than their avowed creeds. But even these, if we examine closely into the sources of their conduct, will be found to have certain interior convictions or principles of action which colour and shape their lives, and which are their true creeds, whatever they may profess to believe. On the larger plan of social and national life, however, it will be easy to show that true intellectual beliefs are of vast importance to mankind. The creed of a people largely determines the character of that people. The creed of the Hindu that this material universe is an illusion, and that life is a vain and undesirable thing, is largely responsible for the nerveless, hopeless, apathetic character of his civilization. It is this, chiefly, which enables a mere handful of Europeans, with a more optimistic, robust, and inspiring religious belief, to hold in subjection three hundred and fifty millions of Asiatics. Once more, the Inquisitor of Spain believed, in common with his age, that God hated and punished everlastingly all heretics. This belief profoundly affected the acts of a Torquemada and his priestly colleagues. They thought they did right in torturing and destroying thousands of their fellowmen. Will anyone claim, in the lurid light of such testimony, that it makes no difference what a man believes? How can his life be right if the interior convictions and principles of action which guide that life are not right? Our life, in a true sense, is only the expression of our beliefs.

The Scripture says truly: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." I conclude, then, that to be liberal is not to hold this or that set of opinions. It is not to antagonise other people's opinions. It is not, finally, to have no opinion at all. Liberalism is a temper —an attitude of the mind—a disposition of the heart towards truth. Liberalism is the supremacy of the spirit over the letter in religion. It is the mind in a state of growth, and is thus distinguished from orthodoxy, which is the type of a mind that has stopped growing, which accepts finalities in religion, and claims that its opinions are infallible. Liberalism recognises that all opinions are more or less fluctuating, but it clings all the more firmly to the interior principles, the great central convictions which determine the character of individuals and people. What are these principles? One of them is that we may trust the veracity of the human reason that a divine thought rules the universe, and our human thought is its faithful reflection. Our reason does not, indeed, teach us everything; but, so far as it does, it is trustworthy, and it goes far enough to give us a true interpretation of nature and a right philosophy for the ordering of our lives. Liberalism furthermore affirms that all thought is free, that to attempt to cram it into dogmatic formulas, and thus arrest its

*For these American newspapers we might substitute *The Christian World* and *The Spectator*.

growth, is a crime against nature and an impiety against God. The true liberal recognises that there should be progress in religion, as in all else. He keeps his mind open to every influence that will increase his knowledge, enlarge his mind, and improve his character. He seeks to grow as the plant grows, as the tree adds layer to layer, as the whole creation develops the ever-increasing purposes of its Maker. In a word, the liberal thinker is an evolutionist in his philosophy. He believes with the poet—

"Through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."

The true liberal maintains, moreover, that while belief profoundly affects conduct, yet conduct in turn is the true test of belief—that man's deeds reveal and justify or condemn their creeds. He holds that thought is good, but life is better, and that he is most likely to lead a noble life who has the clearest vision of truth and is most faithful to his ideals. Once more, liberalism believes in sincerity in matters of faith. It fearlessly utters its honest convictions. It abhors cowardice, it deprecates mental reserve, it despises hypocrisy. It speaks the truth fearlessly, but it speaks it in love; for love is the universal solvent which melts even the rigidity of dogma and tradition.

No mind can be truly free which entertains a hateful, scornful spirit against another mind. The true liberal not only tolerates but loves his fellow-men. He is charitable to their intellectual errors and sympathetic with their endeavours after truth. He reverences their reverences; He knows how gradual is the change from one set of opinions to another. Therefore, he is not impatient with error, if it be error held in the spirit of truth. The only unpardonable sin in His eyes is uncharity—a loveless heart, an intolerant mind. This is our answer to the question, "What is it to be a Liberal?" These are the liberal things which the liberal devises, and by which he shall stand. This is the true interior spirit of Christianity. "The hour is come when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." "The spirit of truth shall lead you unto all truth." It is the teaching of Paul. "Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." "Serve the Lord in newness of spirit and not in oldness of the letter."

"The seekers of the light are one,"—
One in the freedom of the truth,
One in the joy of paths untrod,
One in the soul's perennial youth,
One in the larger thoughts of God.

"The freer steps, the fuller breath,
The wide horizon's grander view,
The sense of life that knows no death—
The life that maketh all things new."

Another Reading of "Helbeck of Bannisdale."

Mr. Gow's careful and lucid study of Mrs. Humphry Ward's latest novel, which appeared in these columns a short time ago, will have been read with interest by many who came fresh from the perusal of "Helbeck," while it must have stimulated the eagerness of many more to seek acquaintance with a deeply thoughtful and more than ordinarily moving story.

Being of the latter number, I can only express my indebtedness to Mr. Gow for the analysis which he gave us of the characters of Alan Helbeck and Laura Fountain, as well as of the emotional and spiritual conflict in which Laura was doomed to make shipwreck. At the same time it is impossible that a book like this—the portrayal of two unusually complex temperaments and the result of their action upon each other—should not leave somewhat different impressions upon readears themselves temperamentally differing; and I trust that it may not be deemed impertinent to try and give what might be called a *supplementary* view of a work of art and thought which seems open to more than one interpretation.

Mrs. Ward possesses in a very rare degree the faculty of projecting herself into the personalities of the characters whom she describes, of stating their point of view, even when diametrically opposed to her own, with something more than strict impartiality—with sincere and real sympathy. Every reader of "Robert Elsmere" will remember with what a loving hand Catherine was drawn, how all through we were made to understand her position, to feel her pangs, I had almost said to condone her

narrownesses, as the result of a peculiar environment and education. This faculty, which shows Mrs. Ward to be a genuine artist as distinguished from a propagandist disguised as a writer of romances, has grown and developed in her writings until in Alan Helbeck she has delineated for us, as Mr. Gow very truly remarks, "the most sympathetic and finely-drawn picture of a Roman Catholic which has been drawn by a novelist who stands poles asunder from his form of faith." Indeed, for my own part, and with the recollection of a recent Catholic novel by a member of that communion still vivid in my mind, I can frankly say that Alan Helbeck appealed to me infinitely more than Mrs. Craigie's hero.

If this peculiarity of Mrs. Ward's method shows artistic accomplishment of a high order, it shows also a certain elevated sense of responsibility, of chivalrous obligation to an opponent—a conscientious striving to deal fairly in the presentation of views of which the author has little in common; she wishes to avoid the very appearance of bias against the people—real people, to her—who hold these views, and hence her Evangelical Catherine, her Anglican Dora, her Catholic Helbeck, are shown in the most lovable light, dowered with the most attractive qualities.

I have dwelt upon this characteristic because it is one which may have a tendency, unforeseen perhaps by the author herself, to make us do less than justice to other characters in her books, to grant them a lesser measure of our sympathy than that to which they are entitled. Some readers certainly—and not orthodox, either—saw more in Robert Elsmere's wife to love and admire than ever they did in him; and in her latest book again, so fine and truly noble a personage is Helbeck, as presented by Mrs. Ward, that the heretic Laura is to a large extent cast into the shade, her difficulties scarcely appreciated, her awful sufferings of heart and mind almost passed over.

Laura is, indeed, placed at a disadvantage all along; the natural impetuosity and sharpness of temper—call it the intolerance—of twenty-one are contrasted with the restrained and disciplined character of a man approaching forty, a man, moreover, who is by nature a grand seigneur, if ever there was one. Her inexperience and want of training and insight render her quite incapable to understand, let alone to fight against, her lover's deeply-ingrained faith; she is simply not *educated* enough to wield effectual weapons—she, half a child!—against a whole system of thought and practice; and, finding herself powerless, she can only go and die.

Nevertheless, I would call attention to the elements of rightness and even sublimity in Laura's character, which, though fully indicated by the author, have been somewhat overlooked by critics. To begin with, it must of course be admitted that her opposition to Roman Catholicism is more an instinctive and hereditary than a reasoned one; but I cannot share the view that, had she understood the grounds of her own agnosticism better, she would have appreciated the "beauty and truth of Catholicism" more readily. She, at any rate, had a sufficiently unperverted moral sense to shrink in horror from the glorified inhumanity of S. Francis Borgia, who, for the good of his own soul, let his young wife die; and her question to Helbeck, whether he, who admires this particular saint, would act similarly for a similar purpose, receives no answer from him, simply because it is unanswerable. She may not be able to understand the joy and solace the holding of a relic gives to a dying Catholic, but she is unwarped enough to shudder at the dishonest and revolting way in which that relic was obtained—cut off by pious thieves from the saint's dead body. She may not be prepared to give a logical and coherent account of the unfaith that is in her, but her healthy instincts are offended by the instance given of "most scrupulous love of purity" of S. Charles Borromeo. So that the verdict upon her agnosticism as "common and very stolid" requires perhaps to be reconsidered and modified; while if it was "not easily to be removed by argument," we must remember that Helbeck of set purpose avoided arguing with her.

But, apart from all this, the sublimity of Laura's character lies, to my thinking, in her unflinching recognition of the impossibility of happiness for Helbeck or herself under the existing conditions, and in the readiness with which she makes her great renunciation. Here she shows a clearness of insight, a strength of purpose greater than her lover's. She sees that

he would, not of intention, but from the necessity of the situation, come to obtrude his religion upon her, become her persecutor; and in tearing herself away, she does, as Mrs. Ward says, "incredibly right." To talk of "looking over, looking around, these trifles of intellectual difference" may be easy enough for the amiable eclectic, Dr. Friedland (whose name rather unhappily suggests that of an eminent living Cambridge man); but such talk is only an instance of what Mr. Gow calls that "carelessness about serious opinions which is common to-day," and against which, according to him, Mrs. Ward's book is a protest. If these opinions are true, they are very serious truths; if they are false, they are most serious errors: in no case are they "trifles," and Laura, to her honour, does not think so. Most essentially is this a case in which love, though of the deepest and purest kind, cannot reconcile differences which go down to the root of character and personality, and the explanation which ascribes the failure of love to effect such a reconciliation entirely to the girl's ignorance and prejudice, seems to me frankly unfair to Laura and beside the mark. Her marriage to Helbeck could only have been a dismal second-best, paralysing his energy and influence among his Catholic friends, and condemning her to the constant misery and irritation of knowing herself an alien to her husband's inmost thoughts, having no share in his ideas, his aspirations, and beliefs (see especially p. 402). She had her one moment of faltering, in which she thought herself capable of sinking her individuality, accepting Alan's faith that she might be Alan's wife; but the moment passed, and she knew that she could never stoop to "living a lie—upon his heart, in his arms"—and, with the terrible courage born of a terrible knowledge, she went to her end in the roaring Greet: a solution rash and most pitiful assuredly, yet as surely not devoid of a certain grandeur and heroism, the recognition of which it were unjust to grudge her at the close of her brief and troubled life.

Such as I have here sketched it, is my impression of this painful and pathetic story, and my reading of one of its chief characters; for lessons, beyond the presentment of deeply engrossing problems of mind and phases of faith, we shall hardly look in it, for it is essentially a tragedy of Fate—of life's undoing, of love's unavailingness—powerful, sombre, inevitable.

J. WARSCHAUER.

Anniversary Hymn.

O Light, from age to age the same,
Forever living Word!
Here have we felt Thy kindling flame,
Thy voice within have heard.

Here holy thought and hymn and prayer
Have winged the spirit's powers,
And made these walls divinely fair,—
Thy temple, Lord, and ours.

What visions rise above the years,
What tender memories throng!
Till the eye fills with happy tears,
The heart with grateful song.

Vanish the mists of time and sense!
They come, the loved of yore;
And one encircling Providence
Holds all forevermore.

Oh, not in vain their toil who wrought
To build faith's freer shrine!
Nor theirs whose love and hope and thought
Have watched the fire divine.

Burn, holy fire, and shine more wide!
While systems rise and fall,
Faith, hope, and charity abide,
The heart and soul of all.

F. L. HOSMER.

The Seed Sower;

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In the Garden of England.

It lies asleep, this beauty-spot of mine, in a far corner of fair Kent; and when you pass out of the shingle-roofed cottage on the hill and linger by the skirts of the wood, there opens before you such a prospect as Fancy, with half-closed eyes, might love to picture. I am standing on the velvet ridge of Harbledown, close by the time-stained almshouses which in the olden days gave shelter to the hapless leper. You may still see the high casement from which was wont to swing the opened wallet that pleaded dumbly for charity from the passers-by, from the pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket down in the hollow yonder. They are alike at rest now, pilgrim and suppliant; but the shrine remains, and we ourselves are but pilgrims of a later day. Nor can you rid yourself of the subdued emotions which the place and the prospect inspire. It is the same scene which greeted the eyes of those long-past travellers with staff and scallop-shell, after their self-appointed toils. Here are only images of rest—gleaming meadows with slumberous cattle in their midst, such as Sidney Cooper (the English Cuyp) delights to paint; golden mazes of the hop-vine; and gently undulating groves, that here and there open out into cool green glades and give glimpses of distant cottage roofs or church spire. There are here no rude manifestations of nature—no brawling streams or rugged rocks, or shaggy undergrowth or dense wood. In this spot the north wind has long forgotten to blow. The wind that comes in from the far-off sea where the white cliffs are for ever gleaming is the softest of zephyrs, that scarce stirs the rose-leaves, and only whispers now and again in the long sedge-grass. And as you descend the hill, your way lies through ripening orchards and scented copses where the filbert and the hazel grow.

It is high noon, and the stillness is profound as you pass in under the overarching orchards with their carpets of softest turf. It is the silence as if of some vast cathedral, whose "long drawn aisles" and fretted columns are here reproduced in the twilight vistas beneath the trees. Now and again come a faint rustle and twitter: it is the little brown birds that are clinging close to the darkened boughs. Just now they are songless; but when great Orion begins to slope westward and the leaves to play in the afternoon breeze, they will take up the thread of their song.

It is thus you go onwards towards Canterbury, through gardens of fruit and across rich spaces of meadow-land, past ivy-clad churches, and red-tiled cottages half smothered by the clinging embrace of jessamine or honeysuckle, with the river Stour gleaming in front like a silver ribbon, and the great towers of the cathedral standing solemnly against the sky. And there is its great clock, too, and its pendulum, which is for ever swinging, and saying:

For ever, never;
Never, for ever.

You can almost hear, distant as you are, its silver-tongued bell. To come upon it in this fashion is like a prelude of sweet music; it attunes the mind to the place and its surroundings. If you care, however, you may dash into the ancient city at express speed, either by the London, Chatham, and Dover, or the South-Eastern Railway, in little more than an hour after leaving London; and in half an hour more, with guide book in hand, you may "do" all the principal sights in the place. But such methods are only fitted for the soulless being who would visit Jerusalem as a Cook's excursionist, or get himself personally conducted through the Vale of Tempe, or play skittles on the Pyramids. The quiet old city does not lend itself to such treatment. Therefore it happens that after the shrieking train has disgorged its human load, a very short time suffices to satisfy the ordinary sightseer. A hasty scramble through the cathedral, and a beefsteak at the old *Rose*, added to the purchase, perchance, of a shilling set of views—these are the pleasures which suffice most tourists until the train is ready to whirl them somewhere else, leaving the place once more to quietness and to me. Let such people, so far as Canterbury is concerned, go stay at home. It has no charms for the great army of professional sightseers. Its charms of sentiment and association cannot be weighed, measured, and duly labelled. They reside, mayhap, in the crumbling stones of an old ruin; in the battered front of a quaint gateway; in the note of a distant bell, or the "coo" of an amorous or complaining

dove; the subdued quiet of the street, the old-fashioned gardens, the sweet air, the calm river, the all-pervading restfulness of men and things. These be its charms, and so they vary with the passing mood of the pilgrims: let the brand-new tourist pass on his clattering way.

If this be your mental attitude, then England holds for you no more congenial haunt. It is a straggling town of one street, long and narrow, with curious little lanes branching off on either side into still quadrangles or leafy solitudes, where you may muse throughout a summer day and be a better man for it. Or you may mount the ruined city wall and linger among the remains of early Christian times, undisturbed save by the solemn music of the chimes; for it is a city of many churches. Chapels, too, it has; but the modern spirit rests upon them, and they chime not except on the Sabbath. There, half-way up the main street is Mercery Lane, leading and pointing like a crooked arm right up to the door of the cathedral. Take off your hat, my friend. Dan Chaucer has been here before you with his attendant train of pilgrims. You have but to shut the eye in order to conjure up vivid visions of the old England which the courtly and passioned-steeped *trouveur* has pictured for us with such magnificent art in the *Canterbury Tales*. It requires no effort of the imagination, as you stand in this quaint alley with the sad and beautiful wrecks of time about you, to reconstruct the gorgeous procession of our English Froissart. There is the Wife of Bath, merry, impudent, droll, and *dégagée*—very *dégagée*; and the Knight and the Miller and the Clerk—all of them breathing types of the dead middle ages, the fine old time of "ruggin' and rivin'." Across the open space, over the way, a leap of the imagination carries you back to the landing of St. Augustine and his band of Christian monks. They have come all the way from Rome in order to convert the Angles: men and maidens, blue-eyed and golden-haired, surcharged with the fierce-flowing blood of a Scaldic race as yet but half-civilised. It is high noon, and the time of day is clashed and hammered from the cathedral tower; and in the pauses of the solemn din you hear the intermittent tread of the incense-bearing monks and their exultant shout of "Alleluia!"

The scene is worthy of recalling: it is that of the introduction of Christianity into Britain, at that time the abode of brave but cruel barbarians. You will scarcely realise the strange beliefs and practices of that far-removed time, standing as you do in the bright summer sunshine of Canterbury with mild and modern accessories about you. If you have touch of Orkney, you shall recall, as you take in the charms of the premier cathedral in the world, the immemorial fabric of St. Magnus, looking with stony glare into the "still vexed" ocean. Not that there is any resemblance, any suggestion of similarity, between the two structures. The one stands in the garden of England, in a rich-hued landscape, whereon the vine ripens and the nightingale's note is heard, where the very blood is warmed by the process of the suns; the other stands by the brim of the sea, the centre of a little world of barren slopes, where the shrill scream of the scart and the gannet and the kitti-wake replaces the mellow strain of the beautiful bird of night. Yet they are not unlike in those features, in those suggestions, which are inspired by the contemplation of kindred beauties of ineffable charms which are inherited in such venerable relics of man's genius and of man's piety—the higher attributes of man here below.

Ideal Womanhood.

Absolute self-surrender is the condition of the highest excellence.—*Westcott.*

The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasions to forbear,
And something every day they live
To pity—and perhaps forgive.—*Cowper.*

The Soul's armour is never well set to the heart unless a Woman's hand hath braced it!—and it is only when she braces it loosely that the Honour of Manhood fails.—*Ruskin.*

Hasten the redemption of Woman . . . by restoring her to her mission of Inspiration, Prayer, and Pity, so divinely symbolised by Christianity in Mary.—*Mazzini.*

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Story the Winds Told.

"Whew, whew, whe-e-ew!" whistled the North Wind, as he rushed along, tearing over chimney-pots, shaking windows and shutters as if a giant was trying to enter. On he went, utterly regardless of consequences, knocking the heads of the trees together like so many naughty schoolboys, flying along—one would have said in hot haste, only he blew so bitterly cold, that the poor little shivering children cowered down more closely to the walls, hoping to escape his fury as he passed.

The truth of the matter was that the North Wind was hurrying to the great Annual Meeting of the Winds, where each one has to tell the good he or she has done during the past year, and the old North Wind was late.

He arrived at last, however, and great was the welcome he received, even from his gentle sister, Mistress West Wind, who generally stood in awe of her big brother from the north.

"Well," said the North Wind, when they were all seated round the glade which formed the council chamber, "what news do you bring, my brother and sisters? What work has been done since we last met? Thou, brother East, art more prone to evil than good, I fear me; what hast thou to say?"

At this the East Wind rose, and coming forward to his brother, presented him with a parchment scroll, saying, "Read for thyself of my work, my brother, and judge."

"Just after our meeting here last year I started off for the City, going my usual round, peeping into open doors, blowing through half-closed shutters, just to remind people that they *were* open, and that they had better be shut.

"As I went along one desolate street in the heart of the City, I blew against a man whom I knew, and who had better have been home with his wife and child than wandering about as he was; so I gave a sharp little puff just into his neck, but he only shivered and went on. After that I gave him a good blow right down his back; and didn't he waken up then! With a grunt, off he started at a trot; I following, you may be sure, up one street and down another, till I brought him up breathless at his own crazy old door. I tried to blow softly when I saw what was there. Listen, my brother! There was no furniture, no bed, no fire, no anything, but a poor miserable woman huddled up in a corner, holding something that was lying on a heap of straw, and that something was a tiny thin hand, belonging to a poor little child, who lay there covered with an old rag of carpet. When we entered, the woman took no notice, only shivered closer to the straw; but the little one, looking up with, oh! such a world of wistfulness in her eyes, said, 'Daddy, see what I've got!' and, with an effort, the child held up a cutting of ivy. 'The angels sent it me, dad,' she went on; 'mother said so when she brought it in; and there's some bread for your supper, and mother has some milk, too, for you, dad, and a lady gave her sixpence for her singing to-night, and we will all be so happy now you've come home, if it wasn't so cold,' she murmured, as she sank back exhausted in the straw. But she wasn't done yet; she motioned the mother to set out the bread and milk for her father, and would not rest till he had finished his share, as she called the bit that he had. Poor fellow! he wasn't all bad: one tiny green spot had been left in his heart which sin and temptation had not yet touched, and he went over to the child and kissed her. Big tears started to his eyes at the touch of the poor thin face, and he fairly broke down when the little one, with one arm round his neck and the other hand in her mother's, slowly and painfully repeated 'Our Father,' which she had learnt at Sunday School in happier days.

"When she had ended a solemn silence filled the wretched room, broken only by the sobs of her father and mother. At last the little voice again said, 'Dad, dear, when I go, will you plant this ivy on my grave? may be it will grow, and you will come and see it now and then, and if it keeps green you will know I'm happy, and you'll try and come to the Good Happy Land too; won't you?' 'Yes, dearie,' the father and mother answered through their tears; and then, to quiet her, they both lay down and, worn out, they gradually fell asleep beside her.

"Gently and lovingly the Angel of Death entered in and lifted the little one in his arms, leaving no trace of his presence save a beautiful smile on the dead child's lips."

When the North wind ceased reading there was a pause for a few minutes. Then he addressed the South Wind—

"Well, sister, what hast thou to say?"

"I have brought the summer wind to weary travellers," she answered, "tired and worn with the heat of toil. The labourers, too, were thankful for my breath fanning their cheeks and brows.

"One day I passed over a churchyard in the Great City, where I saw a tiny grave, and a spray of ivy grew there. A poor man and woman stood by, weeping because the plant drooped with the heat, and seemed almost dying. They kept repeating the words, 'If it keeps green you'll know I'm happy.' I breathed on the ivy, but could not raise it from the ground, so I sadly went my way, searching for my sister here to come and help."

At this the West Wind came forward, and taking up the story, said—

"Yes, when my sister told me her tale I sped away, driving the rain-clouds before me. That night we reached the churchyard, and watered the poor dying ivy. Next day, before I had yet left, I saw the father come; slowly he approached the little grave, as if afraid he would find the ivy quite dead. He looked at last, and when he beheld the beautiful green leaves shining and bright, and sparkling with a thousand rain-drops, he fell on his knees, saying, 'O God, I thank Thee! Have mercy on me, that I may go to the Good Land too, and rest with my child.'"—E. Robertson Croom.